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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENTS IN JAPAN

By EITARO KISHIMOTO

(I)

The working class of Japan has kept up a (heavily bloodstained) fight ever since the beginning of the modern labour movement in 1897. In the face of severe difficulties including subsistence labour conditions without the legal right of organization, the movement was crushed and swept away in the storm of Fascistic power which arose in 1931 and after.

Viewed objectively, it may be said that the absolute tyranny prevailing under the Tenno system as well as the extremely backward economic structure and social conditions in Japan at that time were the cause of the collapse of the movement. But the fact must not be overlooked that the crux of the matter lay in the inherent basic conditions existing within the working class which continued to fight under such adverse circumstances.

But the fact that the grim realities confronting the working class served to weaken and restrict their activities was indeed an unavoidable situation. It may be said that social movements in Japan were chiefly concerned with the adjustment of these conditions and the organization of effective means and methods to carry on the fight.

The working class in Japan which was placed in violent opposition to the most reactionary form of the capitalist class as well as one of the most tyrannical Tenno systems in the world, sought proper ways and means to keep up the battle in spite of numerous failures. But their struggle did not bear fruit and the movement eventually was driven down to oblivion under the most formidable suppression rarely seen any where else in the world.

In pre-war Japan, even in 1931 when Japanese workers were best organized, their membership was no more than 368,975 representing only 7.9% of the workers. And the overwhelming majority was composed of the union of non-combative and extreme right-wing reformists. The

organization was so dispersed as to be criticized as implementing the principle of one-union-per-factory. And the percentage of women workers was overwhelmingly high, representing 53.1% organized labour in Japan even as of 1927 and 47.1% as of 1934, while that of metal and machine-tool workers was exceedingly low, numbering 368,293 in 1929 or representing only 36% of the textile-industry workers, preponderantly women workers (in America 2,937,000, representing 182% as of 1919; in Germany 2,535,108, 231% as of 1923-4; in Britain 2,182,790, 163%, as of 1925). How was it possible to under such unfavorable conditions put up a stubborn fight at all?

In the process of the establishment and evolution of the Japanese capitalism, how did were the above-mentioned conditions that weakened and restricted the Japanese social movements?

(II)

The fact that Japanese capitalism was formed not by an independent bourgeois revolution but by a bourgeois reformation 'from above' due to the absolute Tenno-system; the very reformation in turn became the foundation of the absolute Tenno-system; and the system, in spite of the sudden evolution of capitalism, kept exercising a predominating power until the time of the general crisis in capitalism it is indeed this fact that gave a special character to the social movements in Japan.

In the closing days of the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) when Japan was compelled to open her doors to imperialistic foreign powers, Japanese capitalism was still in the earlier manufacturing stage and landownership by parasitic landlords was flourishing under feudalistic systems. Under such an economy, Japan, in order to escape the semi-colonization by foreign powers, had to resort to the centralization of power and modernization of industry introduction of large-scale machine industry. It was to solve such problems that the absolute Tenno-system came into being. The Meiji Restoration government with the Tenno as the sovereign ruler and with the Sattcho-clan cliques in charge of administrative power, changing the feudalistic tributary tax of high rate into that of monetary delivery of the same rate by resorting to the land-tax reform from 1873, established the parasitic land-lord system, and with these land-taxes were introduced from advanced countries large-scale machine industry centering upon military industry, and created the modern military industry centering upon military industry, and created the modern military system through the con-

scription system and the enormous scale bureaucratic structure such as the police system and others. This was nothing more than the process of the 'from above' creation of modern capitalistic relations as well as that of the original accumulation of capital. This was the process of transforming into capital on a national scale the productive means and subsistence of the direct producers or farming people by collecting land-taxes cruelly and forcibly, thereby reducing them to the proletarian class. However, this reduction of farmers to the proletariat not through the process of banishment from the land or by the modernization or mechanization of agriculture, but by enforcing semi-feudalistic land-ownership due to the loss of land by farmers followed by the decline of landed farmers, the increase of tenant farmers, and the severe destitution of farmers, thus confining to small lands all farmers except some reduced to free workers. This reduction to the proletariat meant the destitution of farmers or of their families' emigration for work to aid their household economy, bringing thus into the mining industry the feudalistic relations in agriculture and necessitating low wages. Herein lies the cause of the emigrations for work that characterizes the whole history of the working class in Japan.

All the newly introduced machine industries were at first officially operated, but since 1880 excepting some parts of the munitions industry, various industries such as cotton spinning, shipbuilding, machinery, mining, etc., were turned over at very low cost to such political businessmen as Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Furukawa, etc. Here was laid the foundation for the later huge financial combines or large autocratic capitalist powers. Thus the 'from above' capitalization and introduction of heavy machine industry, by virtue of absolutism, was established during the decade following 1887. Meantime, the former industries of Japan (indigenous industry) entered the full-fledged manufacturing stage.

What is to be noticed here is the fact that indigenous industrialists or manufacturers active in the field of consumer-materials industries such as silk-reeling, weaving, brewing, etc. were almost equally parasitic as the land-lords, or the land-lords were dependent to a large extent on investments. It is in fact this semi-feudalistic, parasitic landlordship of the bourgeoisie that restricted, left half finished, and broke up half-way the civil rights movement against absolutism of the bourgeoisie.

(III)

Since 1874, especially since 1880, the civil right movement became active against the Restoration Government or Sattcho-clan Government.

The 'Petition for Establishment of the House of Representatives' in 1874 by Itagaki Taisuke and others was pushed through against the background of the most cruel collection of land-taxes during the original accumulation of capital forced at the sacrifice of farmers and during the period of nation-wide riots and disturbances of farmers and others opposing military conscription. The civil right movement led by Itagaki was in fact that of the opposition group within the bureaucratic absolutism and noting less than an absolute reform movement, for the benefit of ex-samurais, wealthy farmers, and rich merchants, to make the despotic barbarism of Sattcho clan power more enlightened along a more bourgeois line.

The civil rights movement which had thus been first started as the movement for overthrowing the Sattcho-clan power for ex-samurais, wealthy farmers, and rich merchants, or small capitalists, was changed into a revolutionary movement at the turn of the year of 1880 with the participation of semi-farmers and semi-proletarians. And during the period 1881-1885 of severe depression or the so-called 'systematic depressed period' which was entailed as a result of the harsh exploitation of the people for the original accumulation of absolutism, the civil rights movement participated in by such semi-farmers and semi-proletariats was accelerated.

Upon such a trend the absolute government imposed a thorough-going pressure by promulgating the public meeting regulations (1880) and others, and on the other hand, in 1881 tried to split and demoralize the civil rights movement by pledging the people for both the establishment of Constitution and the institution of the Diet eight years hence. Already in 1881 within the movement arose the wavering of ex-samurais, wealthy farmers and small capitalists, who began thus to drop from the ranks of the movement. The fact is that the destitution of farmers which had been accelerated during the depressed period came to be sharply opposed to the wealthy farmers and small capitalists who were parasitic land-lords, and to be in class opposition to ex-samurais, wealthy merchants, rich farmers, etc., who were the leaders of the Liberal Party. Anxious about a rising revolutionary trend among poor farmers and semi-proletarians, the leaders of the Party were contented with the Constitution and Diet promised in 1884, relinquishing the civil rights movement half-way, eventually disbanding the Party of their own accord. So the poor farmers and semi-proletarians alone remained to fight valiantly but in vain.

In this way, the absolute clan-cliques government, corrupting the Liberal Party, the mainstay of the civil right movement and winning its

leaders while heavily oppressing poor fighting farmers and semi-proletarians and depriving all of the freedom of speech, assembly, and association with these sacrifices, the government aimed at arranging and strengthening the feudalistic influence, guaranteeing the sovereignty of the Tenno as well as the independence and integrity of the bureaucratic structure, especially the military, and granted from above the Authorized Constitution providing for a powerless Diet, and pseudo-rights and freedom of the people (1889). The absolute authority of the absolute Tenno-system was in effect established on the bourgeoisie's renunciation of civil rights and the suppression of the civil right movement among poor farmers and semi-proletarians, and thus the overthrowal of absolutism which was a subject of the bourgeois democratic revolution came to be the burden laid on the shoulders of the succeeding proletariat.

(IV)

In the year 1890, Japanese capitalism suffered from the first panic, after which it made rapid progress by virtue of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and within the period extending till the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) saw the establishment of industrial capital. It must not be overlooked however that it was in fact made possible by distribution of the war funds of over ¥200 million and influx from China of the indemnity of ¥360 million. Displaced and replenished by the foreign aggression of absolutism, Japanese capitalism was enabled not only to establish equally industrial and monopolistic capital but also to imperialize itself. Out of this process of industrial capital rapidly establishing itself was born the modern labour movement of Japan.

The Sino-Japanese War hastened the accumulation of capital and absorbed an enormous number of the proletariat, while at the same time the price-rise and intensified labour due to increased tax and inflation promoted the destitution of the working class. Thus everywhere the working class rose to their feet to fight for wage-hikes (32 strikes, 517 workers involved for the latter half part of 1897; 43 strikes, 6,292 workers involved 1898). By systematizing this naturally originated labour strife against capital, the modern labour movement of Japan started its own history of hardships.

The workers' organization in Japan was first form undertaken against the background of insecure labour in the form of the Artizans' League (April 1897) and the Society for Establishment of Trade Unions, (July 1897) which were formed by Takado Fusataro, Sawada Hannosuke, Jyo Jyotaro, Katayama Sen, etc., who had all returned from the United

States. Without delay, that is, on December 1897, under the guidance of the Society for Establishment of Trade Unions the 'Iron Workers Union' was organized (by 1,075 mechanics from military arsenals, railway factories, etc.), and Katayama Sen, becoming its secretary, started the publication of its organ *Labour World*. In February 1898, engineers and firemen of the Japan Railway Company went on strike for better treatment, and in April attaining their demands they organized the 'Kyoseikai' or Reform Society. Around that time, more than 100 workers of the Fukagawa Printing Office formed the Typographical Free Talk Society (renamed the Friendship Society in August, and the Typographical Union in November 1899). And the guiding principles which controlled these unions were all of them a sound trade-unionism.

By virtue of the self-sacrificing activities of Katayama Sen and others, the workers' organization made smooth progress (in October 1898 a membership of the Iron Workers' Union numbered more than 2,700) and then at the turn of 1899 registered a declining tendency, but on the whole the labour movement kept going satisfactorily until March 1900 when the Peace Police Law was enacted. Generally those who then took part in the labour movement, filled with a firm confidence over the brilliant future for the working class, were all valiant and enthusiastic in their activities.

Now, the Japanese labour movement in the embryonic stage since 1897 with Katayama Sen for its principal leader, in spite of the very moderate reform unionism in its practice as well as in its ideas, was oppressed in March 1900 by the enactment of Organization Prohibition Law or Peace Police Law by the bourgeoisie and the Yamagata cabinet, absolute bureaucratic administration, both being confused and scared by the prevalence of labour disputes, the rise of trade union movement, and the progress of the study of socialism (the Research of Socialism was established in 1898).

From the enactment of this Peace Police Law Katayama received a death-blow and with this as a turning point grew from a moderate reformist into a socialist, socialism thus through the socialization of Katayama beginning to take root in the soil of labour movement in Japan. At the turn of 1901 the Kyoseikai was completely socialized, and at its annual regular meeting of the same year, reaching a decision that socialism was the only way of solving labour problems, they chose by vote an executive committee for participating in the universal suffrage campaign. On the other hand the 'Research Society of Socialism' which started in 1898 as an organization purely for the study of socialists, and, renaming itself 'Socialism Society' in February of the

socialism, transformed itself at the turn of 1900 into an organization of same year, continued to conduct an active propagation campaign for socialism with Katayama Sen and Nishikawa Kojiro as its leaders until the institution of 'the Common People Society' in November 1903.

This state of affairs helped Katayama Sen and the then socialists in general, bent on breaking the decline and stalemate caused by the Peace Police Law, to pay attention to the party movement, and thus in May 1901 'the Social Democratic Party' was organized by six persons Katayama Sen, Kotoku Shusui, Kinoshita Shoko, Nishikawa Kojiro, Kawakami Kiyoshi, and Abe Isoo. However, the party was presently ordered dissolved by the Ito Cabinet.

As a matter of fact, the Social Democratic Party, pronouncing it its 'Declaration', had highlighted its political and economic demands as well as its own standpoint. The 'Declaration' said that the Social Democratic Party, denying a violent revolution and standing on the ground of a peaceful and constitutional parliamentarism, tried to communize the means of production, and, for its prospectus, raising the 28 items of demands including reduction of armaments, abolition of the House of Peers, abolishment of the taxation on common people, demands for the protection law for various workers and farmers, desired thus earnestly to 'abolish the discrepancy between rich and poor, and to promote the welfare of all the people'. This was in fact the prospectus covering all the fields of bourgeois democracy and nothing more than the demand for bourgeois democratic revolution which had been relinquished by the bourgeoisie.

The then bourgeoisie, increasing its political influence along with an enormous amount of accumulated capital after the Sino-Japanese War, was nevertheless not essentially opposed to absolutism, as was proved by the dissolution of the Liberal Party the abandonment of the civil right movement the compromise with absolutism; and in September 1900, the Constitutional Government Party (no less than the rebuilt Liberal Party) dissolved itself and handed its reins over to the hands of the absolute bureaucrat Ito Hirobumi, giving birth thus to the Seiyukai or Political Friend Party. In this way, the land-lords and bourgeoisie accomplished an illicit union with absolutism under the latter's leadership. As a matter of fact, the Social Democratic Party was crushed down by this First Ito Seiyukai Cabinet.

As seen above, the Public Peace Police Law, which was enacted in March 1900, nipped in the bud the just-started trade union movement, and the ordered dissolution in May 1901 of the Social Democratic Party left workers no room for the democratic movement based on

party organization. Thus, coupled with the extinction of both the trade union movement and the party movement, the social movements of 1901 and after were compelled to limit their activities only to the instruction and propagation of socialism. Herein originated the necessity by which the Japanese social movements came to exhibit an *intelligentzia* tendency.

With the dissolution of the Social Democratic Party, its founders, falling back on the Socialism Society, devoted themselves to the instruction and propagation of socialism, causing thus the ideas of socialism to be disseminated extensively and become prevalent for a while (1903-3). The fact is that the instruction in and propagation of socialism which was extensively conducted following the extinction of the trade union movement and the party movement for socialism, became a menace to neither capital nor absolutism. However, the fact merely means that socialism lost its true nature. And the fact was also well indicated in the resoluteness in which the government handled labour disputes, oppressing them mercilessly by means of both police force and military troops.

Now, socialists were rather separated from the working class at the time when socialism prevailed, but it was not until faced with the crisis and outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War that they found the realities to fight against for the benefit of the working class. The social movement concentrated along this line in the form of anti-war struggle which was firmly pushed forward through the institution of the Heiminsha or Common Peoples' Association headed by Kotoku Shusui and Sakai Toshihiko and the publication of the Common People Paper (Nov. 15, 1903). For more than one year acting against severe oppression, the socialists carried on fierce campaigns against war by pen or tongue or by holding anti-war rallies, but after a series of oppressions the Common Peoples' Paper was ordered to close its publication with its issue No. 64 (Jan. 29, 1905) and the Common People Association also dissolved itself on October 9, 1905 after carrying out a successfully movement. The anti-war campaign was indeed a bright and gallant movement rarely seen anywhere else in the world, but in fact nothing more than the fighting of literally a handful of intellectuals, having nothing to do with the working class. Thus the movement made a rapid progress only intellectually, falling therefore into the so-called *intelligentzia* tendency. After the dissolution of the Common People Association, Christian socialists deserted from the social movement, but in January 1906 once the 'liberalistic' First Saionji Cabinet took the place of the reactionary Katsura Cabinet, socialists

were permitted to organize the Japan Socialist Party 'holding to socialism as the national law permitted'. Furthermore, they were very busy in the instruction and propagation of socialism by publishing the 'Light' as 'an organ for workers' or 'a vanguard of the universal suffrage movement', and at the turn of 1907 expanded its activities publishing the daily Common People's Paper (January 15). However, the Social Party managed to make only the successful execution of the campaign against Tokyo municipal tramway car-fare boost, playing scarcely any role in organizing the working class. And accordingly, either the 'Light' or the daily 'Common People Paper' embodied the quality of an intelligent enlightenment magazine for educating the working class 'from outside' who were rendered ineffective under the severe oppression and the most vicious, primitive labour relations, and either of them, succeeding in essence to an ideological movement of the socialism society, was nothing more than an activity for the instruction and propagation of socialism which was conducted following the extinction of trade unions.

On the other hand, the Russo-Japanese War hastened to a large extent the destitution of the working class by means of a series of large tax boosts, inflation, and a formidable labour intensification. Thus, under the heavy burdens, the working class rose to its feet automatically for strikes (numbering 107 and participated by 20,789 for 1903-1907). Under these circumstances, the socialism of Japan came to transform itself into syndicalism.

Syndicalization of Japanese socialism in the year of 1906 had gotten underway with no other than the ideological transformation of Kōtoku Shūsui, who had been in fact the source of the main current of the social movement since 1903. On his transformation into a syndicalist, of which prospect was slightly shown while he was in Jail just up to his trip to the United States, and it was decisively made during the trip from November 1905 to June 1906 influenced by syndicalization of the then active American labour movement or the I. W. W. movement, his ideological influence, combined with the severe destitution and social confusion after the Russo-Japanese War and the indescribable suppression of socialists, was responsible for the rapid transformation into syndicalism of the Japanese socialist movement which had been conducted by a small number of intellectuals. In June 1906 at the Shūsui Welcome Home Speech Meeting sponsored by the Socialist Party, Shūsui, in a speech entitled 'Currents of World Revolutionary Movement', exposed to light the aristocratic nature of labour, and pointing out the unreliability of the movement

for parliamentary universal suffrage stressed the importance of the principle of economic direct action, and rendering the above tenet more popularized and detailed in an article 'My Changed Thought' in the Common People's Paper issued on Feb. 5, 1907, he went on to refer to the Japanese socialist movement and stressed the need of the direct action of workers. In February 1907, attending the general meeting of the Socialist Party as such a thorough-going analco-syndicalist, Shūsui made a speech for one hour stressing the need of direct action encouraged by the large Ashio mining dispute which broke out just prior to the event. For this reason the Saionji Cabinet ordered the Socialist Party to be dissolved.

Notwithstanding that syndicalism supported above all things the power of proletariat which was concentrated upon larger labour unions and reposed absolute confidence in it, Shūsui advocated the theory of direct action to the unawakened proletariat, nay, the peti-bourgeois intelligentsia of Japan. As a matter of fact, Shūsui's syndicalism was not applicable to the careful observation of the real state of affairs of Japan. It was not the syndicalism stemming from the consciousness of incompetence on the part of the Socialist Democratic Party, a parliamentary party standing of strong trade unionism. But the sense of oppression and irritation engendered by the absolute Tennesse-system which suppressed merely trade-unionism and made impossible the very parliamentarianism, ... the automatically rising strikes by workers against primitive labour relations, ... this was the soil up on which grew the syndicalism in its Japanese form. Criticizing it as a dangerous intelligentsia tendency, however, the group of Katayama Sen and others, who stood with the of workers, stressed the necessity of trying to organize the working class calmly and steadily without being easily provoked by the ruling class.

The general trend of the Japanese socialist movement turned toward syndicalism to a greater degree after the Socialist Party was ordered dissolved, extremely expediting its intelligentsia tendency and engendering the red-flag case (1908), and in the end at the provocation of the reactionary Katsura Cabinet occasioned the high treason case, in which the syndicalists such as Shūsui, Morichika Umpei, etc. were executed on a false charge (1910). The socialist movement thereafter was suffocated by an unreasonable and indescribable suppression, thereby occasioning the winter period of socialism. Basing there tactics on the orthodox Second Internationale, Katayama and others racked their brains on how to organize workers under the above-mentioned circumstances and directed the general strike of the Tokyo municipal

tramway, which extended over the period of Dec. 31, 1911 to Jan. 2 of the following year. With this event as the last, however, Katayama and other's activities as well were suppressed, he eventually finding no alternative but to exile himself from Japan in 1914.

(V)

Deprived of all independent fighting systems by a series of suppressions, the working class, unorganized thus as they were, encountered the 1st World War. The War led to the rapid progress of the Japanese capitalism, factory workers making a sudden increase in number from 853,964 for 1914 to 1,777,171 for 1919, and the importance of heavy industry was increased, the influx of workers into larger factories being largely promoted (the ratio of workers in the three industrial fields of metal, machine, and chemistry increased from 13.6 % for 1909 to 24.2 % for 1919, and the ratio of workers in the factories employing 100 or more increased largely during the same period from 43.5 % to 55.6 %); thereby causing the increase of not the emigrating workers for aiding in household economy but of the free urban workers removing from rural communities. It was on such a basis that the development and establishment of the modern workers movement since the Taisho period (1912-1925) was made possible.

The War, through the promotion of rising prices and intensified labour, hastened the distitution of the working class, which eventually exploded in the rice riot of 1918. The working class rose to its feet to fight for increase of wages (417 disputes by 63,137 in 1919, 497 disputes by 63,137 in 1920), and through this fight rapidly organized themselves into unions (newly formed trade unions numbering 14 in 1917, 11 in 1918, 71 in 1919, and 86 in 1920). In 1917, the success of the Russian Revolution heightened the consciousness of the working class and expedited their fight the more. In 1919, the Friendly Society, which was formed by Suzuki Bunji in 1912 as a very sound cooperative union for management and labour, developed itself into the radical and combative General Federation of workers.

On the other hand, the war gave birth the movement for democracy, and out of this grew the movement for universal suffrage, which was then pushed forward on a nation-wide scale by the participation of the working class at the turn of 1920. However, their enthusiasm for universal suffrage began to wane with the dissolution of the Diet to counteract the Universal Suffrage Bill which was presented before it. Coupled with this, the failure of the campaign of

May 1920 or after for the right of organization gave a sudden rise to a revolutionary syndicalism which had gradually infiltrated among workers through the influence of Ōsuogi Sakae and others and which reached its zenith in the year 1921.

In March 1919, the severe post-war panic broke out, and thereafter capitalism, Japanese as well as foreign, entered the stage of general crisis, where capitalism staggered along panic after panic. Thus the offensive between labour and capital was reversed in position. At the time when the Japanese working class was at last establishing its movement based on the interest of the common people, capitalism entered the general crisis; and both the already reactionary bourgeoisie and the tyrannically absolute Tenno-system became stiffened through the establishment of financial capital, causing themselves to be the more reactionary and savage. It was no less than the natural outcome of these circumstances that the Japanese social movements did not become popularized, its organization was repeatedly split into opposing camps, and union executives' undemocratic maneuverism became prevalent. At the time when the campaign for organization, which under some radicals had been the more awakened by its becoming combative and radical since 1919, was economically and politically putting up a desperate fight directly against the severe suppression and capital offensive, the desire for a seat in the Diet as well as right of organization was crushed to the ground, thus causing the intensification of suppression and capital offensive. It is indeed no wonder, therefore, that under these circumstances a handful of radical workers burning with revolutionary passion were captivated by the revolutionary syndicalism which was adopting an economically direct action. Thus the waves of syndicalism promptly swallowed up the Japanese trade union movement led by a handful of radical workers. It was in essence not different, it needs now no explanation, from the syndicalism in the closing years of Meiji period (1868-1911). Now, at the turn of 1904, the Russian Revolution came to be understood in its true nature among the working class, and with it the failure at home and abroad of the syndicalism's strategy of direct action led to the increase of workers holding to Bolshevism within trade unions, especially, the General Federation and to the criticism and retrospection of the once active syndicalism, the Federation accordingly becoming gradually bolshevized and the anti-Federation bloc coming to applaud syndicalism. In August 1922 the Communist Party of Japan was formed, thus Bolshevism rapidly increased in power. Following the general meeting held at Osaka in September of the same year for instituting the

General Federation of Nation-wide Trade Unions (split into syndicalism and bolshevism, the meeting was ordered dissolved, and the general federation movement ended in a failure), syndicalism began to decline, completely losing strength following the Amakasu murder case. On the contrary, bolshevism constituted the main current of the Japanese trade union movement, remaining at its zenith up to the middle of 1923.

In June 1923, there took place the round-up of the Communist Party taking many victims even from among members of the General Federation. In September of the same year, moreover, when the Great Earthquake Disaster of Kanto District occurred, the reactionary administration, which had been waiting since the June round-up of the Communist Party for a chance largely to suppress and extinguish the labour movement becoming bolshevized and combatant, took advantage of the great disaster to put into effect their cherished desire, the Kameido Police Station arresting and murdering the eight revolutionary workers of the Nankatu Trade Union together with Hirasawa Keiichi, and Gendarmerie Captain Amakasu murdering Ōsugi Sakae, his wife Ito Noe, and his nephew Soichi, 7 years old. The General Federation, which had been bolshevized to be a left-wing trade union since its general meeting of Oct. 1922, was split into the left and right camps, causing its executives to become reactionary and right-winged (turned into social democracy and social meliorism), motivated by no other than the enforcement of a lash-and-bait policy, so to speak, in terms of the first communists round-up case and the large-scale suppression of the radical, fight-spirited workers and socialists at the time of the earth-quake disaster on one hand, and the announcement of enforcement of universal suffrage by the Yamamoto Earthquake Disaster Cabinet on the other hand.

However, the above intensification of oppression and the helplessness of the labour movement this naturally called for reflection over the hitherto labour movement, which was confined only the minority radicals, and caused the routine of their fight to take up realistic matters, as they are called, such as popularization of the trade union movement, application of the reform policy, etc. Already in 1922 an article entitled 'Switch-over of Proletariat Movement' on the 'Zen-ei' or Vanguard Magazine, the above problem was handled by Yamakawa Hitoshi and it was again the very factor which made Mr. Yamakawa and others disband the Communist Party (1924) and advocate the formation of a common front party. The problem became, furthermore, the main item of the agenda at the general meeting of the General Federation of Feb. 1924, leading to the opposition of left and right

in the course of the meeting concerning the drafting of the so-called 'Proclamation of Switch-Over' and eventually of the leftist announcement reaching in the meantime a compromise among them. Nevertheless, between the executive faction (right-wing) who tried to change into meliorism the old principle of their movement, thinking it quite erroneous on the one hand, and the anti-executive faction who stood against this on the other hand, the confrontation grew the more conspicuous, the right-wingers eventually in March 1923 expelling the left-wingers from the ranks and the expelled left-wingers in May of the same year forming the 'Japan Councils of Trade Unions' with the support of their fellow workers (the strength of right-winged and left-winged unions, as of when the Council was instituted, is broken into the General Federation with 35 unions and a membership of 13,960 and the Council with 32 unions and a membership of 12,655).

The left-wingers who rallied to the Council worked first as a revolutionary opposition against the meliorisation of the General Federation, but their clumsiness in the fight against the right-wingers rather fixed the latter in their consciousness as such. And moreover, led astray by the religious sectarianism, i. e. Fukumoto-ism which had been swaying the then communists, the left-wingers fell into the hands of the right-wing sectarianists, thereby driving a lot of less intelligent working people under the control of the right-wingers and engendering the split, which was later fixed, within the front of the trade unions which were in fact non-conflicting organizations of the common people.

The Government had adopted a policy in order to expedite such a split and since 1925 in fact systematized it, the Kato Pro-Constitution Three Parties Coalition Cabinet laying the Universal Suffrage and Public Peace Maintenance bills before the Diet early that year and the Trade Union Law, Labour Dispute Mediation, and Punishment of Violence, etc. bills before the Diet early in 1926, and making all of them, excepting the Trade Union Law bill, to be accepted. Supported by this consistent lash-and-bait policy of the government, the right-wingers fixed themselves as such, relying on the make-believe reform policy of the government and making themselves bosses backed by the less conscious labouring people; and furthermore, negotiating freely with capitalists, they firmly established their position. Again, owing to this splitting policy and the thorough-going left-wing suppression policy of the government, the left-wingers failed to spread their own influence among the working people and confined their activity to the narrow range of a radical, revolutionary movement of the minority.

It was very natural therefore that the proletarian party movement which was planned on the basis of the above-mentioned split Trade union movement failed to constitute a single common front party, and the birth of conflicting proletarian parties was responsible for the resultant split of trade unions. Thus, proletarian parties, born as the result of the passage of the Universal Suffrage bill through the Diet, was separated into the left-wing Labour-Farmer Party (which started as a right-wing proletariat party in March 1926 and switched over to a left-wing in December of the same year), the right-wing Social Democratic Party (which was formed in December, 1926), and the independent Japan Labour-Farmer Party (which was formed in December 1926). Parallel with the separation and opposition of proletarian parties, trade unions too were separated and opposed the Council and other left-wing unions (58,796 workers) which supported the Labour-Farmer Party, the General Federation and other right-wing unions (151,390 workers) which supported the Social Democratic Party, and the Labour Union Federation and other independent unions (38,187 workers) which supported the Japan Labour-Farmer Party.

(VI)

Though hitherto largely restricted in its activity by the interference of the right-wing, the left-wing was made active by taking possession of its own organizations (the Council and the Labour-Farmer Party), and engaged in a gallant fight against the white terrorism of the government-sponsored capitalists. As ill luck would have it, with the out-break of the financial panic of March 1927, the Japanese capitalism was brought to an absolute standstill, and the working class was reduced to the most dire want by dint of production curtailment, lockout, mass dismissal, wage cut, and intensified labour. To make the matters worse, under these economic circumstances, in April of the same year, there was born the Tanaka Seiyukai Cabinet, as reactionary as any cabinet in the past could be, which not only carried on foreign aggression but also imposed an open, out-right intervention as well as indescribable suppression of the labour movement. Resisting such suppression, the left-wing took up arms under the direction of the Communist Party which, the managing to be relieved of the error of Fukumoto-ism, was secretly reorganized, and the Council, organizing the Factories Committee, the Factory Representatives Conference, etc., to mobilize a great number of non-organized workers, rose to their feet for an extensive fight and attained brilliant results leading many strikes, causing thus the

strength of unions to increase in one year following their birth from 32 unions and 12,655 to 59 unions and 35,080. And the Labour-Farmer Party, spreading over the country the so-called 'Diet Dissolution Petition Campaign' demanding the dissolution of the reactionary diet and enforcement of universal suffrage, and then starting economic and political campaigns for the benefit of the daily living of working and farming classes, such as acquisition of political freedom, establishment of farming rights, opposition to bad laws, non-interference in China, unemployment movement, etc., achieved a remarkable development and brought Labour into its own. It goes without saying that worker-farmer fight was pushed along in anticipation of the first universal suffrage of 1928. And in this election, the Communist Party, for the first time appearing openly before the public and plunging with its policies among workers, farmers, and citizens, strengthened in fact the revolutionary arrears to the great extent. Faced with such a state of affairs, the government on March 15, 1928 conducted a large scale suppression of the Communist Party; and at the same time hastily revising for the worse the Public Peace Law threatened the communist movement with the death penalty; and ordered the dissolution of the three left-wing organizations of the Labour-Farmer Party, the Council, and the Proletarian Youth Federation.

On the contrary, both right-wingers and independents, in the presence of the working people becoming combatant or left-winged owing to the precipitation of economic crisis and before the gallant fight of the left-wingers, disclosed to the light their non-class character by dint of the self-defence (of right-wingers) and those giving lip service becoming left-winged (of independents).

Soon after the 3-15 case, the Communist Party set to work reorganizing itself, stressing that it was the only party for workers and farmers, and opposing the rebuilding of the Labour-Farmer Party as a legitimate left-wings party, helped to form the Labour-Farmer Federation For Acquiring Political Freedom (December 1928) as a common fighting organization for working and farming classes. However, as a natural sequel to the effort by which the Communist Party, fighting hitherto as they did behind the Labour-Farmer Party, had popularized the idea that the latter was the only party for workers and farmers, the working and farming people desired fervently for the rebuilding of the Labour-Farmer Party, and therefore under circumstances, Mr. Ikuo Oyama and others, in opposition to the principle of the Communist Party, formed in November 1929 the New Labour-Farmer Party as a legitimate left-wing party (left-wing social democracy). And succeeding to the Council, in

November 1930 the Profintern Labour Union Japan Branch Nation-wide Council (zenkyo) was formed as an illegitimate organization.

Thus, with the year 1928 as a turning point, left-wing or communist organizations and bodies were all driven to resort to illegality, and the left-wing as well, seeing the limitation, incompetency, and inefficiency of the legal movement, began to devote itself to illegal activity, but hardships of the activity and the weakness of its influence under the indescribable suppression and the conditions of duress under the authorities, in addition to the rampancy of both right-wingers and independents on the legal scene were responsible for the sprouting of left-wing legal organizations (left-wing social democracy Proletarian People's Party, New Labour-Farmer Party, Trade Unions General Council, etc.) out of and opposing the above illegal movement. It was what is called the opposition and strife between legality and illegality. The legal left-wing movement, however, in a country like Japan where the movement was extremely limited in operation, could not but necessarily reach a stalemate, thus eventually returning to illegality (the movement of August 1930 or after for dissolving the New Labour-Farmer Party) or having no other alternative but to resort to the nominal leftism within the very limited legal field approved by the government (New Labour-Party, General Council, etc.)

Now, upon the illegal activities of the left-wing was imposed the thorough-going duress and suppression, the large-scale round-up of the Communist Party being again carried out on April 16, 1929, and the Communist Party thus receiving a decisive death-blow. Such a severe suppression came in a short time to drive the illegal activity to an extremely radical tendency, and the extreme left adventurers of Tanaka Seigen, Sano Hiroshi, etc. joined the executives of the Communist Party which was rebuilt after a long ordeal, the extreme leftist direction thus leading the revolutionary movement in the wrong direction (1930). For instance, Zenkyo, regarded as the union department of the Communist Party, was operated so undemocratically as to act by an order from above, and attempted to carry out an armed uprising (the armed May-day procession of Kawasaki city in 1930) as well as the general strike over the country, mechanically opposing and despising the legal movement, and then going so far as to destroy it and to narrow its own activity. Against such a wrong direction rose the Renovation League within Zenkyo, but the birth of this branch did the more to weaken the already powerless Zenkyo (the largest membership was said to be 5,000).

At the turn of 1930, the severest world-wide panic swallowed up

Japan into its vortex, driving the repeatedly stalemated Japanese capitalism to the brink of collapse. All industry was paralyzed, and bankruptcy and closure occurred in succession, thereby causing mass unemployment on a large scale (three millions). With a view to tiding over this crisis and breaking the deadlock of imperialism, the bourgeoisie arranged to carry out a new foreign aggression, and transferred all burdens for it on the shoulders of the working class in terms of the drastic cut in wages and the intensification of labour, reducing thus the working class to utter destitution and imposing a thorough-going pressure upon the resistance and revolutionary movement against it. The working people necessarily became left-winged, rising to their feet for a severe fight. However, owing to the wrong direction of the left-wing, they failed to develop this fight in the right line. In the meantime, against such an extreme leftist inclination arose criticism from within and outside. From around the closing days of 1930, they recovered themselves overcoming their past fallacy, and at the turn of 1931 their fight showed a conspicuous progress, making a large number of working people rise for an economic and political strife. And against the crisis and outbreak of war, they put up the widespread anti-war struggle keeping in close contact with the working class, exerting a large influence on the combatant working class. And towards the last, at the turn of 1932, the Communist Party expanded and strengthened its structure, leading to the development of the popular movement to a large extent. However, a series of round-ups and desperate pressures, with 1931 as a turning point, caused the revolutionary movement to decline and fade away.

Contrary to such a desperate fight, legal social democratic organizations and bodies, swinging to the left or to the right according to either intensification of oppression or working people becoming left-winged, and repeated innumerable times their parting and merger, scarcely putting up any actual fighting; and restraining the working people from becoming combatant and left-winged under the banner of anti-communism, played a role of agents wearing the clothes of workers faithful to the governing class. And faced with the progress of war and fascism of 1931 or after, they not only produced extreme right-wing fascists out of it, but also as a whole transformed themselves into social fascists, rationalizing the war and cooperating with it. Once the governing class succeeded in suppressing the revolutionary influence, they no longer recognized any significance in the existence of the legal social democratic bodies which had been only permitted as anti-communistic, and so ordered them dissolved as soon as the Sino-Japanese Incident broke out, thus proceeding with the fearfully aggressive war receiving almost systematic resistance and severely exploiting the people.